

"Fengqiao Experience" and the Innovative Path of Grass-roots Social Governance

From the Perspective of "the Integration of Three Governance"

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Abstract—Grass-roots social governance is the foundation of national governance. "Fengqiao Experience" provides innovative ways for grass-roots social governance. Through field investigation and in-depth interview, the author summarizes the innovation and development of "the Integration of Three Governance" in the three aspects of autonomy, rule of law and rule of virtue combined with the problems in the process of carrying out "Fengqiao Experience". On the basis of analyzing the feasibility of popularizing "Fengqiao Experience", and from the perspective of "the Integration of Three Governance", the author sums up that grass-roots social governance needs to adhere to "taking autonomy as the basis, rule of law as guarantee, and rule of virtue as the guide" so that a social governance system based on collaboration, participation and common interests can be established.

Keywords—"Fengqiao Experience"; "the integration of three governance"; grass-roots social governance

I. INTRODUCTION

In the report of the 19th CPC National Congress, President Xi Jinping proposed that it is necessary to establish a social governance system based on collaboration, participation and common interests, and improve the socialized, legalized, smarter and professional governance. The "Fengqiao Experience" provides an object lesson for the construction of the social governance pattern. Social governance requires the participation of the public, as well as the norms of the law and the restriction of the virtue. After 56 years of development, "Fengqiao Experience" has become a model of grass-roots social governance in China. In the new era, the new "Fengqiao Experience" has changed the idea and the function. The initial aim is to transform the four kinds of people, but now is social governance. From regulation to management to governance, "Fengqiao Experience" has been leading the country to the modernization of social governance. Introduction and publicity of "Fengqiao Experience" have become the research direction and hot spot of many scholars. However, in the process of practice and development, "Fengqiao Experience" has also appeared difficulties and defects that do not adapt to the times. From this point of view, the author explores the innovative development, dilemma, feasibility and path perfection of "Fengqiao Experience" from the

perspective of "the Integration of Three Governance". Drawing lessons from "Fengqiao Experience" to constantly innovate the path of grass-roots social governance is conducive to the realization of collaboration, participation and common interests and achieving the modernization of grass-roots social governance.

II. THE INNOVATION OF "FENGQIAO EXPERIENCE" ABOUT "THE INTEGRATION OF THREE GOVERNANCE"

In the process of continuous improvement and development, the new "Fengqiao Experience" is always keeping pace with the times. In the aspect of autonomy, people's organizations play an important role and the grid governance carries out; in the aspect of rule of law, it perfects the village rules and regulations, and standardizes the comprehensive governance center; in the aspect of the rule of virtue, it encourages the participation of the township sages, and propagates the outstanding family tradition. It has innovated measures in above three aspects, and integrates them into the "Fengqiao Experience" to achieve "the Integration of Three Governance".

A. People's Organizations and the Grid Governance

1) *People's organizations play an important role and reduce the cost of administration and justice*: Absorbing people into the system of social governance can not only mobilize the consciousness of political participation and improve the ability of social governance, but also reduce the cost of administration and justice. There are a large number of people's organizations in Fengqiao, such as Red Maple Police, Fengqiao Lady, and Women Guard team and so on. The main function of these organizations is to help the government and the masses to resolve conflicts and maintain public order. By 2018, there were about 240 registered social organizations in Fengqiao, including 46 at the town level and 193 at the village level. The number of participants reached 14,500.[1] In field research, officials said a large proportion of disputes were handled by specialized organizations, with a mediation success rate of up to 98 percent.

The masses of the village spontaneously form voluntary organizations, mediate contradictions among their neighbors

in daily life, and coordinate disputes of interest. Through guiding the masses to fight legally, "Fengqiao Experience" makes the people fight in the front line of public security, which forms the most common socialization of public security and reduces the administrative and judicial costs to a great extent.

2) *Grid governance provides precise public services:*

Grid governance is a characteristic autonomous system formed during the implementation of "Fengqiao Experience". It divides all regions into grids, and each grid sets responsible person to manage the transactions within the grid. In familiar communities, where disputes do not involve personal and property security, mediation by respectable people is more effective than hard-line judicial means. In the field survey of Loujia Village in Fengqiao, the author learned that Loujia Village has carried out a grid system in its daily governance such as garbage classification. The advanced party members' family is responsible for several residents around it. In the case of neighborhood conflicts or garbage classification problems, residents first seek the help of party members' families and if they are unable to solve them, people continue to seek help from the village committee. The grid system of Loujia Village not only makes the party members play the vanguard and exemplary role, but also implements the specific responsibility to promote the realization of precise public governance. The most unique feature of grid governance led by party members' house is to realize villagers' autonomy to a certain extent, which incorporates all villagers into the community governance system, and fully mobilizes the sense of participation and enthusiasm of every household.

B. *Village Regulations and Comprehensive Social Governance*

1) *Contract governance is establishing:* "Contract governance" is an important way to realize grass-roots social governance. The contract here is not to refer to the documents of economic relations such as renting or selling in the course of the transaction, but to refer to the agreement of a public group to public affairs, specifically to a village that refers to the village rules which have been negotiated by all the villagers in this village. Some scholars summarized the "contract governance" of "Fengqiao Experience" as follows: Village rules and regulations are the embodiment of the villagers' public will and the vision of grass-roots social governance. [2] The village rules and regulations are norms of the daily affairs in the village passed through discussion, to a certain extent, have legal effect, and are conducive to promoting the rule of law in social governance.

2) *Comprehensive governance center is standardized:* The comprehensive governance center in Fengqiao is mainly responsible for organizing and coordinating the comprehensive governance matters. Standardizing the responsibility of the comprehensive governance center is

conducive to promoting the professionalization of grass-roots social governance. At present, there are 3 township-level comprehensive governance centers, 29 village-level comprehensive governance centers, 32 enterprise comprehensive governance centers, 363 members of various types of comprehensive governance organizations, and more than 1600 members for public security, patrol and so on. Taking Fengqiao Comprehensive Governance Center as the main axis, and working jointly with the police stations at the village level, it will standardize the functions of the comprehensive governance center, and determine six basic duties of comprehensive administration, justice, drug control, anti-cult governance, emergency governance, and service of the floating population, which will promote specialized governance.[3] Taking Chenjia Village Comprehensive governance Center as an example, it has a standardized and complete registration procedure for floating population, which not only records in detail the personal information of each, but also helps the difficulties of floating population, such as providing preferential rental policy and convenient recruitment policy. It will ease internal contradictions and greatly reduce the crime rate of floating population.

C. *Inheriting Excellent Chinese Virtues and Promoting the Governance of Rural Sages*

1) *Carrying forward the excellent family tradition and inherit the traditional Chinese virtue:* Fengqiao Town actively absorbs nutrition from the local culture of Nanmeng. The villages also encourage each family to declare excellent family tradition, reward it, set up a typical model, and promote villagers to inherit it. Among the measures taken by the villages to inherit excellent traditional culture, Loujia Village has built a cultural auditorium, which not only has a cultural corridor that records the glorious deeds of historical heroes, but also has a library that teaches and entertains, a chess board room, and an auditorium to celebrate a holiday and award. Loujia Village also set up a "Loujia Village elderly Association", composed of retired villagers living in and around village, including older teachers over 80 years of age, retired military officers, and middle-aged adults who are still busy with farming work. There is no doubt that their cultural life is very rich, compiling family genealogies, painting landscape paintings, and carving root sculptures. It is these excellent traditional cultures that provide villagers with a substantial spiritual world, enhance their psychological identity to their hometown, and shape correct values, which also laid the foundation for the implementation of "Fengqiao Experience".

2) *Encouraging rural sages to take part in to promote social governance by virtue:* The participation of rural sages is an important measure to perfect the rule of virtue in "the Integration of Three Governance". The so-called participation of township sages means that in each village, all residents jointly elect respectable people. They may be

moral models, elders of large families, retired cadres, veteran party members, or people who are relatively successful in a certain field. These people form the Committee of Counsellor of the villagers, mediating the villagers' daily contradictions. Under the nourishment of Confucian culture for thousands of years, the Chinese nation has formed the tradition of taking harmony as the most valuable. The virtuous governance makes use of geography, blood advantage, and plays the role of co-governance with the government and social organizations. For example, the Committee of Counsellor in Fengyi Village is mainly composed of particularly prestigious elderly cadres and hosts. Whenever there is a dispute among villagers, the committee first separately persuades both sides and then gather to the village committee mediation room. For the mediator's sake, both sides succumb, thus achieving the reconciliation. A soft constraint is often more effective than a tough and direct rule of law in the case of neighborhood contradictions or disputes between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

"Fengqiao Experience" has been continuously improving and innovating, but in the process of its implementation, it inevitably appeared problems and dilemmas, the next part will continue to discuss the predicament of "Fengqiao Experience" about "the Integration of Three Governance".

III. THE PREDICAMENT OF "FENGQIAO EXPERIENCE" ABOUT "THE INTEGRATION OF THREE GOVERNANCE"

In fact there is no problem in the theoretical construction of "Fengqiao Experience", but there will be a dilemma between theory and reality in the process of implementing any theory. The problems of "Fengqiao Experience" are mainly reflected in the following three aspects.

A. Rural Hollowing and Lack of Main Autonomy Strength

The general rural hollowing leads to the lack of main autonomy strength of grass-roots society. According to the Zhejiang Statistical Yearbook published by the Zhejiang Statistics Bureau, the mortality rate of Zhuji City has remained low at about 5 percent over the past decade. In 2017, there were 265761 registered households aged 60 or above, accounting for 24.48 percent of the total population.[4] In recent years, the economic development speed of Zhuji City has not been as fast as other cities in Zhejiang Province, so that a large number of people go out to work, which makes the phenomenon of aging is serious. As for Fengqiao Town, a town under the jurisdiction of Zhuji City, as a result of its excessive emphasis on "Fengqiao Experience", government has the stricter management of economic and commercial activities, which makes economic development relatively backward relative to other towns, causing a large loss of young and adult population. The age structure of population is unreasonable and the phenomenon of aging is very serious, which leads to the phenomenon of rural hollowing. When the economic development cannot meet the needs of the local people, people are busy making a living every day. Therefore, the consciousness of political

participation and the sense of civic identity will be greatly reduced, which directly leads to the lack of main autonomy strength in the grass-roots society. In the new time, the main autonomy strength of grass-roots social governance is young people with knowledge, culture and responsibility in essence. But at present, members of local social organizations are showing an ageing tendency, this is undoubtedly the difficulties and shortcomings of Fengqiao in the implementation of grass-roots autonomy.

B. Weak Legal Thought and Unfirm Principle

In the process of carrying out "Fengqiao Experience", the principle is not strong and the legal thought is weak. "Fengqiao Experience" in the past is that "small things don't come out of villages, big things don't come out of town, and contradictions don't turn over". Having carrying out "Fengqiao Experience" for 56 years, study found it that this kind of thought deeply affects the local people. On the one hand, it maintains social stability and promotes social harmony; but on the other hand, the pressure of the role model for government is too heavy, and the expectation of the superiors is too high, in order to maintain a low rate of public complaints, governments often take non-confrontational and moderate measures. Under the pressure of promotion, grass-roots government generally adopts mild measures to resolve the problem. [5] The consequence is that many contradictions can only be solved on the surface, but the root causes cannot emerge, and sooner or later they will erupt again. There are even some cases involving civil and criminal laws, such as the division of interests in parallel villages, conflicts between labour and management, environmental pollution, and so on, which are far beyond the scope of the "Fengqiao Experience" to solve. If local people deal with it reluctantly, it will not only harm the interests of the people but also cause chaos in the legal order. Although the probability of such incidents is small, it can also reflect the problem of "Fengqiao Experience" in the process of carrying out.

C. Strong Patriarchal Power and Old Tradition Fetter

In the vast rural areas, the problem of village hegemony and clan is widespread, and its harm can be summarized as dissimulation of rural structure, disordered resource supply, shrinking of rural governance space and deterioration of rural political ecology. [6] There are many strong and big clans in Fengqiao, and the clans still have old traditional fetters which have become difficulties and obstacles in the governance of grass-roots society. In the modern society, in which family is the basic unit, everyone is inevitably influenced by kinship and tradition. This situation is even more serious in areas with strong patriarchal ideas. When there are powerful clans in a village and the village committee is monopolized by people in the family, the decision-making of the village committee must benefit their family and ignore the interests of other small groups, which is unable to achieve modern governance.

IV. THE FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS OF POPULARIZING "FENGQIAO EXPERIENCE"

"Fengqiao Experience" is a model of grass-roots social governance in China, but it still needs further exploration and analysis whether it can be popularized in the whole country.

A. *The Inherent Foundation of Realizing "the Integration of Three Governance"*

It is necessary for the whole country to have the foundation of autonomy, rule of law, and rule of virtue to realize the promotion of "the Integration of Three Governance". In ancient China, grass-roots governance in fact formed a governance system of self-government, rule of law and rule of virtue. The characteristics of this system are as follows: rule of virtue first, rule by wise person, stress family and patriarchal clan, ethical rule of law. [7] From the rule of law of ancient legalist school to the rule of law by Confucianism, and to now, after many years of practice and exploration, the concept of rule of law and rule of virtue have been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. The grass-roots autonomy first originated from the city, which is a self-management, self-education, self-service and self-supervision management mode gradually formed in the democratic practice after the founding of the People's Republic of China. From the initial participation in neighborhood committees, village committees, to today's diverse social organizations, the ways through which the public participate in grass-roots social governance are gradually diversified, and with the development of modern democratic politics, people's sense of civic identity, political literacy, political participation awareness and ability continue to improve. The foundation of self-government, rule of law and rule of virtue in our country has become the inherent foundation of promoting the mode of "Fengqiao Experience".

B. *"Fengqiao Experience" Is Representative of Grass-roots Governance*

"Fengqiao Experience" is unique in grass-roots social governance, but more representative. "Fengqiao Experience" is a case, formed under certain historical and environmental conditions. Although our country advocates the promotion of "Fengqiao Experience", whether the "Fengqiao Experience" can adapt to the social governance of everywhere of the country is still a question that many scholars doubt and discuss. Fei Xiaotong believes that the "whole" in the humanities world and the "sum" in mathematical calculation are different. The result of mathematical addition calculation is "sum" which is added by every completely different number, but the "whole" in the humanistic world has the common character of individual, like a copy pattern, all have the basic same foundation and structure.[8] Although the economic, political, and cultural conditions are different, they all have basically the same humanistic basis and development trend, and all have the basic characteristics of "acquaintance society". Therefore, through the case of the "Fengqiao Experience", models for future development in other regions can be explored. Of course, the learning of any experience is not a simple duplication, so the local situation

must be considered, but the "Fengqiao Experience" is still representative in the grass-roots governance of society, which provides experience for other regions.

V. THE INNOVATIVE PATH ABOUT "THE INTEGRATION OF THREE GOVERNANCE" TO IMPROVE THE GRASS-ROOTS GOVERNANCE

After the above discussion, there is no doubt that the "the Integration of Three Governance" is the essence and the core of the "Fengqiao Experience" in the new era. The development of the "Fengqiao Experience" is to improve the grass-roots social governance level by using the "the Integration of Three Governance". Under the requirement of the modernization of the social governance, the grass-roots social governance should be based on autonomy, guaranteed by the rule of law and guided by moral rule.

A. *Improving Public Participation Based on Autonomy*

1) *Playing the leading role of Communist Party of China:* In the grass-roots social governance, it should play the role of fighting fortress of the Party organization and the vanguard and exemplary role of the party members. First of all, party organizations should strengthen their own construction, improve the overall quality of party members, and become their own strong ruling party. At the same time, the Party organization should guide the masses to join the social governance, perfect the mechanism of public participation, enhance the consciousness of political participation, and improve the ability of political participation.

2) *Improving the deliberative democracy:* Study found it should improve deliberative democracy, promote democratic decision-making, scientific decision-making, and study the "three-up-three-down" decision-making mechanism in Fengyuan Village, so that decision-making can fully reflect public opinion and benefit people's livelihood. At the same time, it should carry out an open system of village affairs and government affairs, consult villagers for suggestions, accept villagers' questions, which will reduce internal contradictions among the people, and promote long-term stability of society.

3) *Integrating all the organizations to realize the cooperative governance:* Authors think it should integrate the resources of all the social organizations and make an overall plan so that each performs its own functions. . In a wide range of social voluntary organizations, there are many organizations whose functions are repeated, such as the repetition of patrol times, the overlap of mediation functions, which causes the waste of personnel and costs. The communication among the organizations should be strengthened, and the cooperative governance of the organizations should be promoted.

B. Promoting the Legal System of Grass-roots Governance Based on the Rule of Law

1) *Building a system of social norms which is as regulations main body*: The regulations of the village are a narrow social norm and have the legal effect if it is without the conflict with the Constitution. Under the discussion of all the villagers, it should develop or modify the village rules and regulations, and build the social norm system with the regulations as the main body.

2) *Improving the communication channel of the masses to protect their rights*: When it comes to the high rate of public complaints in Fengqiao town, the government should improve the legal communication channels for the people to protect their rights according to law to normalize the public complaints. At the same time, it should strengthen the legal concept of leading cadres and the masses, make them govern according to law, administer according to law, safeguard rights according to law, and promote the rule of law in grass-roots social governance.

3) *Setting the scope of the rule of law*: In view of the weak concept of the rule of law mentioned above, the government should set the scope of grass-roots rule of law. And the local government should be clear about what can be dealt with by the people themselves, what must be strictly enforced by public power, and to what extent something needs to be solved by which way. Only by setting a unified standard of execution and clear responsibility can people standardize the order of rule of law and promote the rule of law.

C. Strengthening the Moral Restraint Guided by Moral Rule

1) *Playing a leading role of moral model*: Guided by moral rule, authors think it need to play the leading role of the moral model. Local government can select the moral model in the villages, promote their glorious deeds and highlight the role of the model, so that it will encourage the villagers to abide by ethical norms.

2) *Enhancing the identity of the local culture*: The implementation of rule of virtue is to strengthen the moral restriction, and the establishment of such a moral restriction must enhance the public's sense of the local culture. It should constantly advocate the excellent traditional culture and enhance the sense of the masses to the local culture, thus strengthening the restraint of the moral standards and enhancing the sense of honor and responsibility.

3) *Carrying forward the Core Values of Chinese Socialism*: The 18th Congress of the Party put forward, cultivated and practiced The Core Values of Chinese Socialism, and in the practice of the "Fengqiao Experience", People should also integrate the social consciousness and develop a unified moral standard. At the same time, the government should integrate the Core Values of Chinese Socialism into all aspects of social life and transform it into people's emotional identity and behavior habits.

VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the practical innovation of "Fengqiao Experience" on the aspect of "the Integration of Three Governance" can provide an object lesson for grass-roots social governance. The grass-roots social governance should be based on autonomy, guaranteed by the rule of law and guided by moral rule. "Fengqiao Experience" is a typical and model of grass-roots social governance and it is feasible to popularize the whole country. In the future, China should vigorously promote and develop the "Fengqiao Experience" in grass-roots social governance.

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